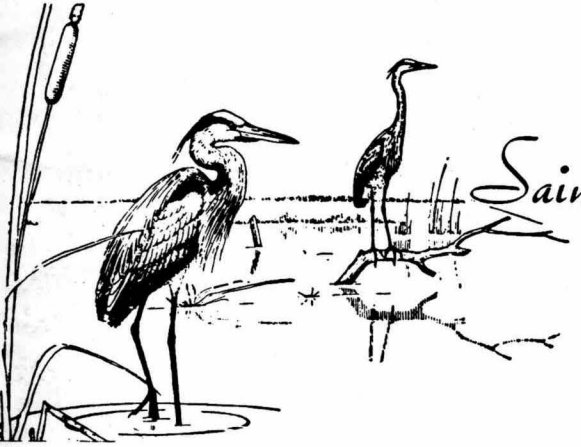

Saint Louis Audubon Bulletin

April, 1964 Vol. 33, No. 3

EARL L. HILFIKER

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 1964

Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington — 8:15 P.M.

"WILDLIFE OF THE EASTERN WOODLANDS"

The St. Louis Audubon Society in conjunction with the Academy of Science and the St. Louis Zoo Association will sponsor an unusual Audubon Wildlife Film that will be a treat for all who see it.

The course of events in the life of Earl Hilfiker has prepared him well for his position in the Audubon Wildlife Film roster of speakers.

He grew up in what he refers to as the "crossroads community" of Parma Corners, outside of Rochester, New York, the city which is his home today. His father's mill pond was Earl's playground, and while other youngsters were playing "one o' cat," Earl was becoming familiar with the many forms of wildlife in and around that pond.

As a student at the University of Rochester, he majored in biology, and earned his education by collecting and selling biological specimens. He graduated in 1927, and entered the teaching profession for a twelve and a half year period, teaching biology in various high schools in New York State. During this period he received his Master's Degree from the School of Education of New York University.

Later he worked as Assistant Curator at the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences and developed an appreciation of research studies.

An ambition to write a biology textbook, illustrated with his own photographs never materialized, but it did launch Earl on a career as a photographer, in which he has established a fine reputation. He has served as motion picture photographer for the State of New York Conservation Department, and has appeared on many of the large travel and adventure lecture circuits.

We are happy to have such an able and qualified lecturer as a representative of the National Audubon Society.

As our human population increases, so does our need for wild areas. It is not enough to simply retain what sanctuary and recreational lands we now have. We must continue to set aside wilderness areas where wild-

life can be observed undisturbed and unafraid. Earl Hilfiker of Rochester, New York, is so convinced of these facts that he has produced a full color motion picture to illustrate them.

A central character in *Wildlife of the Eastern Woodlands* is the beaver, aptly depicted as an engineer in a fur coat. Audubon audiences will have an opportunity to study these remarkable animals at work and at play. The step-by-step process of constructing a beaver dam is shown in extraordinary closeup photography. We see beavers walking on their hind legs, carrying mud in their arms while repairing their homes.

The beaver exerts a strong influence on the wildlife community. Beaver ponds store water, retard erosion, and slow down the destructive force of flood waters. Although the ponds are constructed to suit the beaver's needs, they also attract many forms of wildlife. Frogs, toads and other amphibia are shown in unusual close range sequences. Spawning fish are recorded on film, and there is an extraordinary sequence of trout eggs hatching.

Different waterfowl use the beaver ponds as resting stations on their migration routes, and a number of mammals too, are influenced by the presence of the beaver.

Wildlife of the Eastern Woodlands is noted not only for its compelling conservation message, but for its "once in a lifetime" film sequences. Earl Hilfiker is an engaging speaker, and he offers to audiences a unique opportunity to become acquainted with a most interesting part of this continent.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The three sponsoring organizations wish to thank Lanier and Cecil Criger for their untiring efforts to see that we have the best sound effects possible at all lectures at the Third Baptist Church.

SPRING BIRD WALKS OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Bird walks begin in Forest Park on the last two Sundays in April and the first two Sundays in May.

Dates: Sunday—April 19
Sunday—April 26
Sunday—May 3
Sunday—May 10

Meeting Place: Parking lot behind Art Museum.
Time: 7:30 a.m.
Information: Call Chairman of Walks, Martin Schweig, Jr., FO 1-4226.
SPECIAL: The Spring Census Round-up will be held this year on Sunday, May 3rd. Compiler — Earl Hath, YO 5-8642. Call for details.
Due to conflict of dates, the Arboretum Field Trip on Sunday, April 26th, is cancelled.
For beginners: Bird Walks in Shaws Garden.
Dates: April 25, Saturday.
May 2nd, Saturday.
Meeting Place: Main Gate, Tower Grove Entrance.
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Leaders will be on hand. For information: Call YO 5-8642.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

By Mrs. Jane M. Stuessie

Some years ago we found ourselves the happy owners of a few acres of nearby Ozarks, on which were a log cabin, two creeks and a wealth of wildflowers. All our weekends were spent there, and as season followed season we became more and more entranced with our floral display, though we had no more than a nodding acquaintance with most of the plants. A desire to capture and hold all this beauty sent me into the woods armed with Steyermark's "Spring Flora of Missouri" and a camera loaded with color film.

I had everything to learn, a new use for a new camera as well as names and habits of my flowers. Common names are easy and fun, botanical names are more exact, so I tried to learn both. Folk lore is interesting, some plants are edible, some are poisonous, various plants grow in certain places under certain conditions, and so on. Much to learn.

According to Dr. Steyermark's new book, "Flora of Missouri," there are some 2400 species and varieties of plants growing in Missouri. Those growing north of the Missouri river on the prairie land, which was covered by glaciers thousands of years ago, are quite different from the flora of the Ozark plateau. There are many more different species in the Ozarks, but the fewer species growing on the prairie lands seem to produce more plants per specie. The state is a limiting boundary for some species, for instance, American Holly (Ilex opaca) grows in southeast Missouri but not any farther north. Many different kinds of landscapes provide many different conditions for many different species and so give us our great floral wealth.

One of the earliest of the Ozark flowers to appear is the Bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis). The common name comes from the reddish juice in the root which the Indians used as a dye. It is better to just admire this starry white little flower with its immature leaf wrapped around its stem, for the juice can cause a severe dermatitis, or nausea if eaten.

Another early flowering plant in rocky or thin woods is the Dutchman's Breeches, (Dicentra cucularia), with the little breeches hanging on the stem as if to dry. This plant is closely related to the old-fashioned Bleeding-heart found in many Victorian gardens.

Rue Anemone (Anemonella thalictroides) dances gently on its thin wiry stems with every little breeze, giving reason for its other common name, Windflower. If you will pick a piece of the first plant you see in bloom in the spring you will have good luck all through the year. The starchy tuberous roots are edible when cooked, in fact in some parts of the country it is called wild potato.

Toothwort (Dentaria laciniata) has white four petaled flowers and leaves deeply divided like so many fingers. It is a member of the cress family and its root, a series of roundish tubers like beads on a string, are a good addition to a salad or may be eaten as a relish. They are crisp and the flavor is similar to watercress with a hint of mustard.

Early in April you may notice a rosette of finely cut, reddish leaves making their way through the litter on the forest floor. These are the early leaves of Wood Betony (Pedicularis canadensis). Later the leaves will be a fresh green and the flower, carried above them on an eight to ten inch stem, is an odd combination of green and yellow. Another common name for this plant is Lousewort. The word wort appears quite often in older common names and I found that it comes from an old German word, wurz,

and an old English word, wyrt, both meaning root or plant. The Louse in this case refers to a pioneer days' use of the leaves by housewives as an insect repellent.

The Wild Goose Plum (Prunus munsoniana), is a small tree, usually growing in clumps or thickets. In April it is literally covered with tiny white blossoms which attract bees in great swarms. Later in the year small red plums cover the trees. They are quite tart and have a large seed but they make a delicious jelly. Birds of various kinds also seem to enjoy them. In fact the common name is due to this. It seems that one day, many years ago, a farmer shot a wild goose. When he cleaned it he found a seed in its crop which, being both frugal and curious, he planted. Several years later he noticed the little tree, which had grown from this seed, was producing small red plums and so he promptly named it Wild Goose Plum.

The Bellwort or Merrybelles (Uvularia grandiflora) always looks a little droopy, the yellow flower at the tip of the stem hangs down, bell like, and the long narrow leaves, which clasp the stem, also are inclined to trail. You may eat the young shoots of this plant as you would asparagus. The root is also edible.

The Shadbush or Service Berry (Amelanchier canadensis) is a small tree of thin woods. It blooms before the leaves are out on any of the trees and makes a pretty flash of white when every thing else still looks brown and drab. Later on its produces wine red berries relished by birds and men.

The Violet Wood Sorrell (Oxalys violacea) looks very much like the common sour grass, to which it is related, that we dig out of our lawns, except the plant is larger and the flowers are a rose violet rather than yellow. It is also related to the Irish Shamrock and is sometimes sold by florists as the Shamrock. The slightly acid tasting leaves and seed pods may be added to a salad.

The Larger Ground Plum (Astragalus mexicanus) is one of many species in the Legume family and it has played an important part in the early history of the Northwest. The greenish white, sweetpea-like blooms are followed by large pods about the size and shape of a yellow plum. They are firm, solid and heavy and they pull the plant down until they rest on the ground. Being legumes they are high in protein and other food values and were collected by the Indians as an important part of their diet. The whole pod is eaten and the Indians used them fresh, either raw or cooked or dried them for winter storage. These plums were given by the Indians to Lewis and Clark as they made their way to the Northwest and later to other pioneers, and probably many escaped starvation, or at least serious hunger, because of them. A plains variety of Astragalus is collected by prairie dogs and stored in their underground dens for the winter. Oddly enough the ill-famed loco weeds of the western plains is a close relative of this valuable plant.

A strange and interesting occurrence in the Ozarks is the limestone glade. These are eroded and weathered areas, usually rather small, of exposed thin limestone layers, covered in spots with thin pockets of soil. During the winter months the glades ooze water and then turn dry and hot as spring advances into summer. Most self-respecting plants find nothing to their liking here but a few do, and the bloom can, at times, be quite spectacular.

Very early in the spring the glade may be literally blue with Bird's Foot Violets (Viola pedata), either the single or bicolor varieties or both. They snuggle in among the rocks with apparently only a handful of soil satisfy-

ing their needs. A little later the gorgeous Missouri Primrose or Glade Lily (Oenothera Missouriensis) makes its appearance. It is a true evening primrose, opening its blossoms towards evening and closing before noon the next day. The blooms are bright sunny yellow and as big as bread and butter plates. Fremont's Leather Flower (Clematis Fremontii) grows on the glades only in southeast Missouri. The leaves of this plant are sessile on an upright stem and are covered with coarse, bristly hairs. The bloom, at the tip of each stem, is made up of dull purple sepals in the shape of a pendulous bell with the true flower parts inconspicuous inside the bell. The beautiful Purple Cone Flower, (Echinacea palida) comes along later and the Coreopsis (Coreopsis lanceolata) blooms around the edges of the glade most of the late spring and summer.

The glades are truly places to watch, for, inhospitable as they seem, something seems to be growing there most of the time from spring to fall.

From the viewpoint of a rank amateur, who didn't pay close enough attention in Botany class in school, there is much to enjoy and to learn in the Ozark woods outside of the purely scientific aspect. For me, it increases the pleasure of exploring the woods to learn to recognize, call by name and know something about as many of our Missouri flora as I can, at least those that grow in our part of the Ozarks. I have only mentioned a few of the spring blooming plants and there are, of course, so many many more, that "Getting to Know Them" can be a joyful task for many years to come.

PROMINENT MEMBER TO SPEAK

Leonard Hall will speak on April 16th at 8 p.m. at the 6th Annual Meeting of the "Committee for Nuclear Information" at Heman Park Community Center, 975 Pennsylvania Ave. at Vernon, University City. The subject of his talk will be "Man's War with Environment."

IS DDT REALLY CHEAPER?

Finally accepting fisheries research studies of several years standing showed DDT responsible for a decline of lake trout, the New York Conservation Department announced it would discontinue using this residual (long-lasting) chemical in forest pest control operations in the lake trout watersheds. In a letter to Conservation Commissioner Harold G. Wilm, President Carl W. Buchheister of the National Audubon Society asked why the ruling wasn't extended to all forest-spraying operations by the Department, throughout the state. Mr. Buchheister pointed to mounting evidence that food-chain accumulation of DDT was adversely affecting the Bald Eagle and other fish-eating birds. Commissioner Wilm replied:

"One reason for not extending the restriction to all forest lands is that we are awaiting the results of research studies currently underway on food chains and other species of fish. We hope these studies will give us sound facts on which to base future policies.

"Another reason . . . is the simple economics of the situation. As you know, Conservation Department forest pest control responsibilities, as provided by law, involve 14 million acres of both public and private lands. The cost of spraying with DDT is about thirty cents per acre compared to one dollar per acre for Sevin, which will be substituted for DDT in lake trout watersheds and other selected areas. As you can understand, budget aspects of these control programs are considerable and each year it is necessary for the Conservation Department to justify to the Budget Director the expendi-

ture of funds for this purpose."

Further inquiry by Mr. Buchheister elicited the following information from Deputy Conservation Commissioner J. Victor Skiff:

"During the past ten years, annual appropriations approved by the Legislature for forest pest control work has amounted to slightly over $200,000 a year. Such funds, of course, cover not only spraying but also surveying and administrative responsibilities. In the ten-year period referred to above, control work has involved about 100,000 acres a year."

In view of the damages caused by this persistent chemical, the question for New York State citizens and their Conservation Department to decide is this: Is DDT really cheaper? Another pertinent question: Are all of the forest spraying operations really necessary? Are some of them carried out just because the money has been appropriated? Spraying for gypsy moth, a forest insect of minor economic significance, is a case in point.

Early St. Louis Area 1964 Birding Results

By J. Earl Comfort

As a result of the St. Louis Audubon Shaw's Garden Arboretum walks and various trips by the Webster Groves Nature Study Society during the first 2 months of the year we tabulated an impressive composite area bird list, which included several rare species as well as many unusual winter listings.

Rarest species was a male Pine Grosbeak located near Creve Coeur Lake by Jack Van Benthuysen on January 18th. There were 2 Golden Eagle reports, the first by Dick Anderson on January 5, the other by Sally Vasse near Swan Lake, Calhoun Co., Illinois late in February. Early in January Eugene and Diane Wilhelm contributed a rare Bohemian Waxwing at the Arboretum where several listers found scarce Red Crossbills, holdovers from 1963. The Arboretum also furnished several uncommon Red-breasted Nuthatches.

Steve Hanselmann set an individual January record with 103 area species. The total list for this month was 112. The total 2 month count was 126.

Unusual wintering species in January included Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Wood Duck, Coot, Killdeer, Bewick's Wren, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Myrtle Warbler and Towhee. Wood Ducks wintered in unusual numbers at the August A. Busch Wildlife Area. Some other rare species, not mentioned above, appearing in the 2 month period were Oldsquaw Duck, Harlan's and Pigeon Hawks, Glaucous Gull, and Long-eared and Short-eared Owls.

By far the most amazing check was that of 130 Bald Eagles in the Swan Lake Area by Dick and Sally Vasse on January 5th.

Earl and Connie Hath's feeding habits survey resulted when they captured a Screech Owl which they offered various types of food. Before they released the captive they learned the bird would accept only feathered types of beef (beef stew artificially covered with feathers).

NEW EDITION OF FIELD GUIDE TO THE MAMMALS

We are happy to note that Burt and Grossenheider's famous *Field Guide,* which enables the user to identify quickly and easily any North American mammals encountered north of Mexico, has now been completely rewritten and greatly expanded. Only the 32 superb full-page plates, the line drawings, and a few maps are repeated from the first edition of 1952. The enlarged descriptions of various species of animals—378 in all—include new sections on habitat, habits, young, and economic status. Important alternate common names have been added. Most of the book's 291 individual range maps have been revised to incorporate current information. In the rewritten legend pages facing the plates, new general area descriptions facilitate swift recognition in the field. The renowned Peterson identification system, the many illustrations, and the concise presentation of essential information combine to make this the best field book available for North American mammals.

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